

And somebody knew that he was up to that, and they wanted to stop him from doing it; so they spied on the campaign so he wouldn't be elected. And once he was elected, they spied on the Executive Office to see what they could do.

I remember a story that a friend of mine told me about talking to some Democratic Senator in February of 2017, who told that friend of mine that Trump would not be President by the end of that year of 2017. Now, whether that Senator knew what he was talking about, I don't know; but I reflect back on that conversation I had with that friend, and I wondered if they really thought that by doing what we know now they were doing, that they were going to be able to get him out of office before the end of 2017. So I give you a little example of what I call hypocrisy in this city.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I come to the floor today to talk about the economy.

You know, right now, inflation is at a record high. At the same time, what we are seeing is that Joe Biden's approval rating by the people all across this country is at a record low. And there is a connection.

This morning, the majority leader came to the floor of the Senate and said that Democrats were going to talk about inflation at their policy lunch today—today, February 15, 2022—13 months after Joe Biden took office.

Democrats have been in power for almost 13 months. They control the White House. They control the Senate. They control the House of Representatives. Ten months into this inflation crisis, what they are doing is putting forward gimmicks, not solutions.

They want to get past the upcoming election. They don't want to get to long-term solutions for our Nation.

On Thursday, the world found out that prices in the United States had risen at their fastest pace in 40 years, and of course that was the same day that Joe Biden's approval rating dropped to 40 percent.

The American people are getting squeezed financially. They are feeling the pain, and they are furious with President Biden. Since Joe Biden became President, wages have gone up slower than prices. Prices have gone up faster than wages. People can't keep up. It is hard to even stay even. As a result, the American family today can afford a lot less than it could the day that Joe Biden took office. Over the last year, inflation outpaced wages by over \$1,400. That is an over-\$100-a-month differential.

So who gets hurt the worst when your wages fall behind the increasing costs of Joe Biden's economy?

Well, it is families who are struggling; it is young couples; it is people living on fixed incomes; it is people trying to go to work every day to put

bread on the table. In other words, the people who are hurt the most are the people who can afford it the least. They are feeling the pain and paying the price every time they go to the grocery store and every time they go to the gas pump.

Big price increases have occurred in energy. CNBC reports that one in five American families couldn't afford to pay the energy bill over the past year. The same number, roughly, kept their homes at an uncomfortable and unhealthy temperature because they can't afford the cost of energy to heat them. Many have had to choose whether they are going to heat or to eat. Gas prices have gone up by over \$1 a gallon since Joe Biden became President.

American energy production is still not to the level that it was before the pandemic. We are still producing 1.2 million fewer barrels of oil each day than we were before the pandemic. We are not producing it here, but—oh, by the way—Vladimir Putin is selling 5 million barrels a day of crude oil in the international markets. This is a direct result of the anti-American energy policies of Joe Biden and his entire administration and the Democratic Party in this country. People understand simple supply and demand. When the supply goes down and the demand stays the same or goes up, prices go up as well.

It is also what happened with America's workforce. The Democrats created the worst labor shortage in American history. We have broken records for unfilled jobs in 5 of the last 12 months.

So when did it start?

Well, it started in March of this past year, when Democrats passed their \$2 trillion spending bill, which was not paid for and added to the debt, and the bill gave a bonus payment for people to stay home from work. People were getting paid more not to go to work than they were able to make had they gone to work.

What happened when the bonuses ran out?

Joe Biden imposed a national vaccine mandate, saying that if you don't get the vaccine, you lose your job. The vaccine mandate took a sledgehammer to the American workforce. According to one survey, half of America's small businesses couldn't find enough workers in just this past December. If you drive around Wyoming, you will see "Help Wanted" signs all around my home State. What happens when you have fewer workers? It means empty shelves and higher prices. When supply goes down, prices go up.

Now the opposite is also true. That is what we have seen with the value of the dollar. Last March, Democrats flooded the country with government cash. Now the dollar, in many people's wallets and pocketbooks, doesn't go as far as it did before.

Democrats passed the largest single spending bill in American history. They put \$2 trillion on the Nation's credit card. Republicans warned: Do

not do this. It will cause inflation. Democrats didn't listen. Every single Democrat in this Senate voted for it; every single Democrat voted for it; every single Republican voted against it; and Joe Biden signed it.

Since then, prices have gone up faster than wages. First, they said it was going to be temporary. Then, astonishingly, in July, Joe Biden said inflation was expected. He kind of bragged that he had seen it coming all along. Well, if he had seen it coming all along, why didn't he do something about it? All that this President has done is put jet fuel on the fire of inflation. He told us inflation would be transitory, and he said it month after month, after month, after month. He can't say it anymore. Oh, no. Inflation is here, and people are paying the price and feeling the pain.

Last week's inflation report should be a blaring siren to the Democrats in Washington, and I was so happy to hear the majority leader, this morning, saying, finally, today, at lunch, February 15, 2022, that the Democrats were going to start talking about inflation at their policy lunch today. They should all be suffering from significant indigestion.

This is a crisis, and Democrats are doing nothing about it. The Democrats borrowed trillions of dollars this year.

This week, Democrats in the House are talking about getting rid of the debt ceiling completely—of spending more. They are talking about a blank check, unlimited borrowing, and trillions and trillions more in spending, which will only mean higher and higher inflation.

Inflation will not go away on its own. Democrats need to stop the reckless spending. They need to stop the nationwide mandates. They need to stop shutting down American energy. The American people cannot afford any more records like the ones that Joe Biden is setting right now.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

NOMINATION OF GIGI SOHN

Mr. TILLIS. Madam President, I always strive to treat each and every nominee—regardless of party affiliation—with dignity and respect. I evaluate their credentials and make a decision on whether to support them based on their qualifications, their temperaments, and whether they will serve the interests of all of the American people.

That is actually why, in my role on the Judiciary Committee, I have voted for almost half of President Biden's nominees. In my judgment, some were qualified and deserved confirmation, and in my judgment, some weren't. Again, I evaluate each nominee on an independent and fair basis. With this in mind, I hope my colleagues will take seriously what I have to say today.

I rise to speak in opposition to, perhaps, one of the most radical nominees the President has put forward to date.

I am talking about the nomination of Gigi Sohn to be an FCC Commissioner.

Ms. Sohn is exactly the type of radical activist we should avoid confirming to lead any Agency, especially an Agency as critical as the FCC. Her radical activist track record and her out-of-the-mainstream views on everything from free speech to intellectual property indicate to me she will weaponize the FCC against the American people.

Ms. Sohn has made no secret of the fact that she loathes Republicans, conservatives, and any media organization that doesn't share her world view. One need look no further than her deeming FOX News as "state-sponsored propaganda." She has supported State governments and used their power to destroy conservative news outlets. When California's liberal legislature tried to pressure broadcasters into dropping conservative news organizations, she supported—yes, she supported—their effort.

It doesn't stop there. If confirmed, she will have the power to censor conservative media and retaliate against any view that is different from her own.

Worse than her disdain—probably even hatred—for conservative news media, she has also made it clear that she simply detests Republicans as people. She has claimed Senate Republicans are a threat to "our Republic" and claimed their "ideology has overtaken their duty to serve their constituents." She even claimed that Republicans can only win elections by "suppressing the vote" and destroying democracy.

As someone who won reelection in a State with a nearly 80-percent turnout in the last election, I can tell her that that isn't the case.

As if her disdain for conservative media and Republicans isn't enough, she has also demonstrated she is a radical, anti-copyright activist who will use every lever of power at her disposal to harm America's content creators.

For years, she dismissed the economic harms that our outdated copyright laws have caused content creators. She belittled their demonstrated pain and suffering, and she opposed efforts to fix the failed copyright system. During her time at the FCC as a senior adviser to FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler, Sohn championed the FCC's attempt to unlock pay-TV set-top boxes.

This disastrous policy would have destroyed the intellectual property rights of copyright owners to the benefit of big tech companies like Google, and these big tech companies have conveniently funded Sohn over the years.

She has never apologized for this disastrous policy. In a 2016 op-ed, Sohn downplayed any concerns with this proposal by proposing only a hypothetical solution to address them.

Finally, anyone who doubts her radical views on intellectual property need look no further than to the fact that she literally served on the board

of directors of a company named Locast, whose sole purpose was to engage in illegal copyright infringement.

Let that sink in.

Gigi Sohn, a longtime anti-copyright activist who worked on policies at the FCC to destroy copyright owners' rights, then subsequently served on the board of a company that made money by infringing on copyright and likely made money from the illegal activity in the process and, not only that, I have real concerns that she appears to be hiding relevant information to the lawsuit. She failed to disclose the fact that the amount of money exchanged by Locast was much lower than the reported \$32 million settlement. As an explanation, she stated that she answered the questions within the confines of the settlement agreement.

Playing "hiding the ball" while seeking a position of public trust is not acceptable. I believe her nomination would undermine public confidence in the FCC and our government.

If this were any other nominee, especially a Republican nominee, any one of these issues would be enough for my colleagues on this side of the aisle to stand up and ask the President of our party to withdraw the nominee. I hope my Democratic colleagues will review Ms. Sohn's record, just like I have, in a fair and impartial manner, and reach the only reasonable conclusion; that she cannot and must not be confirmed.

I again call on President Biden to withdraw the nomination of Gigi Sohn. If he won't, I hope I can count on 51 Senators to stand with me and make it clear that we won't allow such a radical activist to be confirmed to the FCC.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. RES. 512

Mr. HAGERTY. Madam President, for nearly 2 years, the U.S. Capitol Building and Senate offices have been largely closed to the American people whom we serve. Our constituents have been unable to enter the Senate buildings to meet with their representatives, and Americans of all ages, from schoolchildren to seniors, have been deprived of the patriotic sense of wonderment that comes from visiting the hallowed halls of the Capitol Building. The openness of the Halls of Congress and public participation in the legislative process have always been hallmarks of American democracy.

It is long past time for the Senate to reopen its doors to the American people. Thanks to Operation Warp Speed, vaccines have been available for more than a year for those who want them. Americans have learned how to safely gather and enter public places despite the pandemic. Over 70,000 people attended the Super Bowl in Los Angeles on Sunday, in fact. Yet there are reports that some of the leadership in this building want to significantly limit the number of lawmakers who are allowed to attend President Biden's State of the Union Address in just a couple of weeks.

From stores to venues and most workplaces and schools, the rest of the United States has reopened to gatherings and regular business. Shouldn't the Senate, whose buildings belong to the public, do the same? That is why I have introduced a resolution providing that the Senate, first, recognizes the importance of reopening the Capitol and Senate office buildings to the public and, second, supports returning to the pre-COVID visitor policies for areas within Senate jurisdiction. I am pleased that 26 of my colleagues have joined me as cosponsors of this resolution.

Importantly, if there are operational matters that need to be worked out as part of reopening, this resolution provides no obstacle to doing so. It simply states that the Senate supports reopening and recognizes the importance of doing so.

I am asking my colleagues to join me today in support of the access to American democracy and a return to normal life and in opposition to endless pandemic lockdown, and I am pleased to be joined here today by my colleague from Indiana.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. BRAUN. Madam President, as ranking member of the Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee, I rise today in support of the Senator from Tennessee's resolution to reopen the Capitol and the Senate office buildings. As he said, for nearly 2 years, we have not been operating from what I was used to for the short time I had been here prior to that. Governors across the country finally are beginning to do the same thing, even in places where they were almost in lockstep with the way we were doing things here.

Today, you can only enter the Capitol Complex with an escort by a staff member. One of the things constituents from back in Indiana enjoyed most—the senior Senator from Indiana, TODD YOUNG, started it before I got here—was the Hoosier Huddle. From 9 to 10 every Tuesday, every Wednesday, we had folks from all over our State coming into the Capitol so we could have that conversation on issues that were important. Now we do it by Zoom.

The rest of the country is saying: Enough is enough; we want to get back to at least some of the ways that were in place prior to COVID.

Now, Washington lobbyists are allowed in because of their close connections with congressional staff, but the American people don't have that same access, and that is just wrong.

The legislative branch Agencies have continued to provide support to Congress throughout the pandemic. It is time that Congress reopens the Capitol to the American public, including Hoosiers from my home State.

I yield the floor.

Mr. HAGERTY. Madam President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed

to the consideration of S. Res. 512, submitted earlier today. Further, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, reserving the right to object, I object.

As chair of the Rules Committee, with oversight of the security of this Capitol, I share Senator HAGERTY's goal and Senator BRAUN's goal of ensuring that this building is open and accessible to the public. I agree with them that it is important to reopen the Capitol, and I personally can't wait to have my constituents back as well for our Thursday morning breakfasts. But we must do this in a way that takes into account the health and safety of everyone who works here and not just the Senators.

This is a decision for the Capitol Police Board, in consultation with the medical experts in the Office of Attending Physician.

While the worst of the Omicron surge is behind us—and that is such a good thing—they have told us there is still work to do. At the same time—and I think this is one of our challenges as we look at how we are reopening and how we do it, because I think we will end up doing this incrementally, and I hope we can start soon—at the same time, ongoing staffing challenges facing the Capitol Police are an important consideration that must be managed carefully by the Capitol Police Board. The Capitol Police are already stretched thin. More than 130 officers have left the force since the January 6 insurrection last year.

At a Rules Committee hearing that I held with Senator BLUNT just last month, Chief Manger testified that the Department is down 447 officers. Let me repeat that: 447 officers. The officers who remain have had vacations canceled and have worked significant overtime. The Department, as we learned at our oversight hearing—we had two in the last 3 months—has taken steps—and I personally asked about this, Senator HAGERTY, because I care so much about reopening the Capitol—they have taken steps to address these shortfalls, including addressing the number of recruit classes, with the goal of recruiting 280 officers per year for the next 3 years. That is additional officers. The Department has also taken steps to retain officers already on the force, including by issuing retention bonuses and hazard pay.

We took a very important step last summer on a bipartisan basis to provide funding for security improvements at the Capitol and to ensure that the Capitol Police have the resources to do their jobs when we passed the emergency funding bill led by Senator LEAHY and Senator SHELBY that the

President signed into law. But, as Chief Manger just said at a public hearing when he explained that we were 447 officers short—which, of course, means who is the at the doors, what doors are open, and what backup do they have—he said we still have a ways to go before he has officers to staff all the posts needed to safely reopen to the public.

So there is still much more work to do. I, for one, am in favor of making changes so we can begin the process of reopening as soon as possible. The Capitol Complex should, of course, reopen so Americans from across the country can visit and see our democracy at work. We are simply relying on the health and security experts to ensure that how and when we do reopen, we do it safely for everyone who works here, including the staff.

For these reasons, Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. HAGERTY. Madam President, I greatly respect my colleague from Minnesota, and I have enjoyed working with her on the Rules Committee, but her objection to this resolution provides an unfortunate but clear answer: No, Democrats don't support reopening the Senate.

Hopefully sometime soon, my Democratic colleagues will wake up to the fact that Americans are sick of endless lockdowns and the condescending message that it sends to the American people that they need government to tell them what to do.

With regard to the objection that we need a more measured process in consultation with various officials, I talked to the Capitol Police Chief last week, and we can work with his team and the Sergeant at Arms to address any specific operational issues. We can also work with the Attending Physician. All of that is downstream of the basic question here, which is whether the Senate supports reopening. If the Senate supports reopening, then we can figure out the rest.

Senate leadership sets the policy for the Capitol Building and the office buildings that are under Senate jurisdiction. That is why we have different COVID policies than the House. If it was up to the Attending Physician or the Capitol Police, the policy probably wouldn't change at the midpoint of the Capitol Building, as it does today.

We are the elected officials in the building. We are the ones who were elected to make decisions. We shouldn't dodge that responsibility, and we need to lead by making a clear statement that it is time to reopen the Senate to our constituents. It is unfortunate that many of my Democratic colleagues don't feel the same way. We need to reopen the Senate now.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, over the past year, the Biden administration has put out some truly absurd propaganda, but last week, they released something that was so over the top that I had to double-check to make sure that it was real. Yes, of course, it has up here that it was issued February 7, 2 p.m., and it is going to expire June 7 of this year at 2 p.m. It had all the markings of something that was legitimate, but it is so outrageous that I confirmed that it was actually a government-issued document.

Of course, I am referring to the Homeland Security memo that is summarizing the current terror threat to the United States. Under normal circumstances, you would expect a threat assessment to be a helpful document. That is what we have come to expect. But in this case, it wasn't obvious before, but now it is so obvious. It is crystal clear that conventional definitions of the word "normal" no longer apply to this administration.

If you have not read this, you will not believe your eyes. What makes it so uniquely infuriating is the ease with which DHS used an official document to equate violent terrorists with Americans who refuse to fall in line with the Biden administration's narrative of the day. They did it so easily, just laying out their case of threat assessments to the United States.

Alongside descriptions of actual violence and threats against churches and schools, DHS warns of "the proliferation of false or misleading narratives, which sow discord or undermine public trust in U.S. Government institutions." The bulletin specifically identifies "widespread online proliferation of false or misleading narratives regarding unsubstantiated widespread election fraud and COVID-19" as "[k]ey factors . . . contributing to the current heightened threat environment."

Yes, you heard me correct. They identify widespread online proliferation of false and misleading narratives regarding unsubstantiated widespread election fraud and COVID-19.

So let's decode this. They are not just talking about acts of violence committed to achieve a political or an ideological goal; they are talking about dissent. What does DHS suggest someone do if they find themselves menaced in the court of public opinion? They want you to report the offender to law enforcement. That is right—report the offender to law enforcement.

I have come to the floor time and again to detail just how frightened the American people are of Joe Biden's radical agenda, but this bulletin is the best evidence I have seen to date of just how frightened Joe Biden is of the American people. They must be scared to death over there in that White House. How dare anybody question them? How dare anybody call them into question for the agenda that they have? I would even go so far as to suggest that this betrays his administration's desire to police the speech,